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SUBJECT: HU JINTAO EMERGES FROM PARTY CONGRESS STRONGER,
BUT STILL MUST ACCOMMODATE OTHER PARTY FACTIONS

REF: A. BEIJING 6762

[1](#)B. BEIJING 6734

[1](#)C. BEIJING 6719

[1](#)D. BEIJING 6692 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Ambassador Clark T. Randt, Jr.
Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) Communist Party General Secretary Hu Jintao has emerged from the 17th Party Congress stronger than before, but China's new leadership lineup revealed today indicates that he must continue to accommodate other interests within the Party. Hu Jintao was "reelected" to the top positions of Party General Secretary and Chairman of the Central Military Commission. Among the nine members of the Party's new Politburo Standing Committee (PBSC) unveiled October 22, four are new, and only two are young enough under current informal guidelines to remain in power after the next Party Congress in 2012. Hu successfully promoted to the PBSC his purported protege, 52-year-old Liaoning Party Secretary Li Keqiang, but Li, ranked seventh, came in behind 54-year-old Shanghai Party Secretary Xi Jinping, ranked sixth, who reportedly was a

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compromise candidate more broadly supported within the Party. Based on rank order and past precedent, Xi now appears to be the frontrunner to succeed Hu in 2012, having also been appointed to the key position of head of the Party Secretariat. Although Zeng Qinghong, the powerful Vice

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President, stepped down, two of his alleged allies, Politburo Members He Guoqiang and Zhou Yongkang, joined the PBSC. Hu was successful in promoting several of his allies to the larger 25-member Politburo, yet an emphasis on balance was also evident in those appointments. Today's decisions apparently indicate an emphasis on collective decision making, a balancing of Party factions and an emphasis on Party stability, with an eye toward a smooth transition of power in 2012. At the same time, however, the Congress has made clear that Hu Jintao's ideology and policy prescriptions of robust economic growth tempered by attention to concomitant social tensions, represented by his "Scientific Development" slogan, will guide the Party's policy priorities over the next five years. End Summary.

CHINA'S NEW LEADERS: BALANCE AT THE TOP

[1](#)2. (C) Capping months of speculation about China's new leadership lineup through 2012, Hu Jintao led members of the Party's most powerful body, the Politburo Standing Committee (PBSC), before the press corps assembled at the Great Hall of

the People October 22. The announcement followed the reported "election" that morning of a 25-member Politburo and its nine-member PBSC by the first plenary session of the Party's new 204-member 17th Central Committee, which itself had just been "elected" the day before at the concluding session of the 17th Party Congress. The nine leaders of the new PBSC were introduced in the following protocol order:

- Hu Jintao, General Secretary, incumbent;
- Wu Bangguo, National People's Congress (NPC) Chair, incumbent;
- Wen Jiabao, Premier, incumbent;
- Jia Qinglin, CPPCC Chair, incumbent;
- Li Changchun, ideology head, incumbent;
- Xi Jinping, new, Shanghai Party Secretary, "princeling."

(Note: Xi was also appointed as head of the Party's Secretariat, an important position overseeing the operation

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of the Politburo, which was formerly held by VP Zeng Qinghong.);

- Li Keqiang, new, Liaoning Party Secretary, Hu protege;
- He Guoqiang, new, Party Organization Department Head and Politburo Member, close ties to Zeng Qinghong. (Note: He was also made head of the Central Discipline Inspection Commission (CDIC).);
- Zhou Yongkang, new, Public Security Minister and Politburo Member, close ties to Zeng Qinghong.

¶3. (C) The new leadership lineup appears to indicate that even though Hu Jintao has emerged from the Congress stronger than before and clearly leads the Party, he still must accommodate other interests within the Party. Fifty-two-year-old Liaoning Province Party Secretary Li Keqiang, viewed as Hu's preferred candidate as Party chief at the next Party Congress in 2012, was elevated to the PBSC. However, Li took a second seat in the PBSC rank order to 54-four-year-old Shanghai Party Secretary, Xi Jinping, who contacts and foreign media reporting have said is a compromise candidate more broadly supported by most key

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interests in the party.

FOCUS ON 2012

¶4. (C) The elevation of these two young leaders, Xi and Li, appears to be an effort to put in place now a slate for top offices at the next Party Congress in 2012, in an attempt to facilitate a stable transfer of power. If the Party adheres to the current informal norm of requiring retirement at age 68, Xi Jinping and Li Keqiang will be the only two members of the PBSC eligible for reelection in 2012. Both men are members of the "fifth generation" of leadership and, in a rare move, were catapulted to the PBSC without having previously served in the Politburo. (Note: To our knowledge, only Hu Jintao himself and former Premier Zhu Rongji have achieved this feat since the reform era launched by former supreme leader Deng Xiaoping.) Based on past precedent, because Xi Jinping is ahead of Li Keqiang in rank order, he would appear to be the front runner for Party chief at the 18th Party Congress in 2012, while Li would appear for now to be slated for the Premier's slot.

EMPHASIS ON PARTY STABILITY

¶5. (C) On balance, the PBSC lineup announced today appears to reflect an emphasis on power sharing, balancing of interests, and collective decision making in the interest of stability and a determination to avoid the "strongman" tradition of the past. There is also the suggestion of greater "institutionalization" of Party procedures, given that all PBSC and Politburo members who were 68 and over stepped down. (NOTE: Contradicting this possible trend toward

"institutionalization," however, is the promotion of Xi and Li directly to the PBSC from the Central Committee, which, as noted above, is quite rare.) The departure of the powerful Vice President Zeng Qinghong appears to be an important victory for Hu, allowing him to remove a potential rival and diminishing divisions in the PBSC. Zeng, despite having cooperated on key matters with Hu Jintao in recent years, was a power unto his own and was suspected by some of maintaining close ties to former General Secretary Jiang Zemin. In what may have been a political deal as part of Zeng's withdrawal, however, two Politburo members alleged to have close ties with Zeng, Organization Department Head He Guoqiang and Minister of Public Security Zhou Yongkang, were elevated to the PBSC.

16. (C) In terms of what is known about alliances at the top of China's Party, the new PBSC appears to be much better balanced (and more in Hu's favor) than the previous one, which was heavily weighted in favor of Jiang Zemin's allies, at least initially. Of the eight members in addition to Hu, two are known to be close supporters of Hu (Wen Jiabao and Li Keqiang); three are believed to be close to Zeng or Jiang (He Guoqiang, Zhou Yongkang, and Jia Qinglin); and two have unclear allegiances but seem to have worked closely with Hu on the previous PBSC (Wu Bangguo and Li Changchun). Xi, the scion of a revolutionary veteran and former Politburo member, reportedly has close ties to Zeng and enjoys support from other Party "princelings" and veteran cadres, but contacts have told us he is highly regarded within the Party and has a broader base of support through demonstrated competence in running important coastal provinces. Xi also appears to be acceptable to Hu, given that Hu had already signed off on Xi's appointment to Shanghai as Party Secretary earlier this year after the removal of Politburo member Chen Liangyu on charges of corruption. (NOTE: One should be careful not to overemphasize the issue of "factional" balancing atop the Party. A range of contacts over the past year have made clear that, given the complex and overlapping interests of China's top leaders, it is difficult to clearly delineate "factions" among China's leaders in every instance, who still appear generally united on the key issues facing the Party and the country.)

RETIREMENTS FROM THE POLITBURO

17. (C) Several members of the 16th Politburo were not reelected to the new 17th Central Committee at the October 21 concluding session of the Party Congress and therefore have stepped down from their posts on the Politburo and the PBSC. The PBSC members who stepped down include Vice President Zeng Qinghong, Central Discipline Inspection Commission (CDIC) Head Wu Guanzheng and Chairman of the Politics and Law Commission Luo Gan. On the larger Politburo, Vice Premier Wu Yi, Vice Premier Zeng Peiyan, CMC Vice Chairman Cao Gangchuan and former Tianjin Party Secretary Zhang

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Lichang also stepped down. (NOTE: Because the decisions of the Party Congress pertain only to the Party positions of these officials, it is anticipated that those with State/Government positions (Vice President, Vice Premier, and so on) will retain those titles until the March 2008 National People's Congress (NPC), at which time they will step down from those government posts, to be replaced by members of the new Politburo.)

LARGER POLITBURO APPOINTMENTS

18. (C) At the same time it elected the nine PBSC members above, today's first plenary session of the 17th Central Committee also reelected Hu Jintao as General Secretary of the Party and elected 25 members to a new Politburo, one more member than the previous Politburo. In addition to the nine PBSC members above, 16 other leaders were "elected" to the

Politburo, including the following eight "incumbents":

- Guo Boxiong, incumbent, PLA General, Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC);
- Hui Liangyu, incumbent, Vice Premier;
- Liu Qi, incumbent, Beijing Party Secretary;
- Liu Yunshan, incumbent, Propaganda Department Head;
- Wang Lequan, incumbent, Xinjiang Party Secretary;
- Wang Zhaoguo, incumbent, NPC Vice Chairman;
- Yu Zhengsheng, incumbent, Hubei Party Secretary, "princeling";
- Zhang Dejiang, incumbent, Guangdong Party Secretary;

In addition, the following eight new members were placed on the larger Politburo, listed in alphabetical order:

- Bo Xilai, new, Commerce Minister, "princeling";
- Li Yuanchao, new, Jiangsu Party Secretary, Hu ally;
- Liu Yandong, new, United Front Work Department Head, Hu ally;
- Wang Gang, new, former General Office Director, former Politburo alternate, reported to be Zeng ally;
- Wang Qishan, new, Beijing Mayor, Zhu Rongji protege, reportedly close to Zeng;
- Wang Yang, new, Chongqing Party Secretary, Hu ally;
- Xu Caihou, new, PLA General, Vice Chairman of Central Military Commission (CMC);
- Zhang Gaoli, new, Tianjin Party Secretary;

¶9. (C) While the motivations behind all of the above appointments are not entirely clear, it is noteworthy that three of those newly joining the Politburo have close ties to Hu Jintao and the Communist Youth League: Li Yuanchao, Liu Yandong and Wang Yang. At the same time, however, there is a likely indication of "balance," with a nod was also given to a "princeling" (Bo Xilai), as well as a Zeng ally (Wang Gang). Moreover, the PLA retained its two slots on the Politburo, as before: CMC Vice Chairman Guo Boxiong retained his seat, while another CMC Vice Chair, Xu Caihou, entered the Politburo in place of Minister of Defense Cao Gangchuan, age 71, who stepped down after not being elected to the Central Committee at the Congress's closing session.

HU'S POSITION BUTRESSED BY HIGHER IDEOLOGICAL AUTHORITY

¶10. (C) Although today's leadership announcement points to Hu's having to accommodate other interests in the Party, particularly on personnel decisions, the Congress did give Hu a strong boost in terms of adopting his policy prescriptions as the guide to the Party's direction for the next five years. The new Central Committee endorsed an amendment to the Party Constitution that enshrined Hu's "Scientific Development Concept" (SDC) in the ideological canon on a par with the doctrines of past Party chiefs Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin. Elevating the SDC to the Party Constitution, the most authoritative source of Party ideology, in effect gives Hu a powerful weapon to counter political and policy challenges from rival Party factions and deflect criticism from orthodox communists on the "Left" who have attacked the expansion of market reforms. The resolution called the SDC a "scientific theory with the same lineage" as Mao, Deng and Jiang and a "concentrated expression" of Marxism "with regard to development."

¶11. (C) Although this rhetoric does not call the SDC the Party's overall ideological "guide" as in the case of Deng's and Jiang's theories, contacts have told Poloffs that the SDC is, in fact, the dominant ideological prescription for the next five years, meaning that it is Hu's policies that will guide the country through 2012. Both Dong Yuyu (protect), senior editor at the Central Committee paper Guangming Ribao,

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and Fang Jinyu (protect), Beijing bureau chief for the Guangdong CPC Committee's Southern Daily, told us, in

separate meetings, that the language used to characterize the SDC was meant to convey the message that Hu's "thought" carries the same ideological weight as that of Jiang. Other language in the resolution lends credence to this judgment, calling on party members to "grasp the essence" of the concept, be "more determined in applying it," and to "change notions that are not in line with it."

Randt